

# COCK O' THE NORTH

NEWSLETTER OF THE ANGUS RAILWAY GROUP



*CR 123 With the Scottish Rambler Rail Tour at Auchinleck on 20 April 1962.*

*Lindsay A C Horne*

**Membership open to all railway enthusiasts**



E D I T O R I A L

Welcome everybody to a very Happy and Prosperous New Year. We can look back over the past year with some measure of pride. Thanks to a great deal of hard work, we have succeeded in fulfilling our ambition to publish our first volume of railway photographs. The latest report of sales which is to hand shows that the book has been given an enthusiastic reception by the general public. Indeed, there is every possibility that we shall be required to have a second impression. So if you have still not bought yourself or a friend a copy, don't put off too long.

During the past few months this Newsletter has been kept going largely by the serialisation of Leslie Morrison's article on the Glasgow to Aberdeen railway and by contributions from a few of our members. Next month's issue will contain the last part of Leslie's article. We mention this in order to give any readers, who are so inclined, time to pen an article on any aspect of railways, factual or fictional. Unless we receive some articles, then the future of this Newsletter in its present form will have to be given serious consideration. The Newsletter has in the past been a vital organ in keeping members, who for various reasons cannot attend Meetings as often as they would wish, updated with events and more recently it has formed a link between the Group and the general public. We feel sure that members will wish it to continue to do so and will take steps to ensure that it does.

In the meanwhile, pleasant reading.

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ALAS, SIR THOMAS

Considerable publicity has been given during the past few months to track realignments, which must of necessity be made, before introduction of High Speed Trains ( Inter - City 125's ) on the East Coast Main Line between London and Aberdeen.

Presently, most of the trains from London stop at Cupar in Fife. If the HST trains are to do likewise, British Rail might be advised to conduct an experiment in passenger comfortability. For, whilst it might be blissful to travel to one's destination seated in the most modern of ergonomically styled, air - conditioned coaches, we have been reminded that there is many a slip twixt cup and lip.

The northbound platform at Cupar is well known for the gaps of various height which must be straddled whilst ascending or descending from coaches. The use of small wooden steps, such as are to be seen at Dunblane or Errol, would surmount the difficulty, but not perhaps without just a little ridicule. And valuable time would almost certainly be lost in their placement.

A letter from the Traffic Superintendent's Office in Dundee to D. Deuchars Esq., Edinburgh, dated as long ago as 24th October 1907, describes the inevitable late running of augmented Aberdeen trains caused by the need for double stops at Cupar. A passage in the letter states:

" there have been repeated complaints from Sheriff Armour and others that the existing platforms are too low, especially since the new vestibule stock was put on the trains generally. Further, the existing platforms appear to be in a rather dangerous condition, and I believe the Engineer's attention has already been directed to this, so that some alteration appears to be absolutely necessary "

In a letter, three years later, from the Procurator- Fiscal's Office at Cupar no less, it is stated:

" The platform was built for carriages of the old type. It is 26 inches too low for the step of modern carriages. The matter is aggravated by the circumstance that there is a curve upon the line "

That same year, the Office of the Chief Engineer wrote the following to a Wm. Kettles Esq., at Dundee:

" We have had steps at the station for years to put down to enable aged people to get in and out of trains. The steps were got specifically for Mrs. Gillespie of Mountcuhannie, mother of, (well yes,) Sheriff Gillespie, who complained his mother could not get in or out of trains owing to lowness of platforms."

The absolutely necessary work of heightening 435 feet of northbound platform by one foot was completed in February 1913, by when sufficient funds had been made available.

Some ten years earlier and a number of miles further north, an application by the Town Council of Arbroath for more efficient railway station accommodation was heard before the Railway and Canal Commissioners. A merchant and shipowner of that town, appointed at a prior meeting of its inhabitants, said in evidence that the existing station was very insufficient, and in several ways dangerous.

It was insufficient for the number of passengers coming in and going out. It was not long enough, and it was very narrow at some places. The trains were frequently too long to be accommodated at the platforms and due to a want of publicity, there was often considerable difficulty in preventing people from alighting at the end of the train, before that part had been drawn up to the platform. The witness had seen as many as fourteen passengers climb down from a train to the lineside.

A hundred years ago the 'Perthshire Advertiser' on Monday, August 7th, 1877 informed its readers that the Board of Trade had decided to appoint Col. Yolland to inquire into the complaints made by the Police Commissioners regarding the unsatisfactory and - wait for it - dangerous state of the railway station, this time at Coupar Angus.

Even around the turn of the century, Cupar, Arbroath and Coupar Angus could not be described as places of mean importance. The question which immediately must come to mind is an obvious one - What were conditions like at the many far less consequential stations on both the North British and Caledonian systems? Unless these respective companies were strangely more safety conscious concerning

small wayside stations, then logically the number of hidden dangers awaiting the casual visitor should have been greater as their size diminished. That the local traveller's safety was neglected at the expense of inter-company rivalry, arising from a fixation about Aberdeen, would have been, by all accounts, a deplorable policy. Yet, when one puts all the facts together, undoubtably there arises some doubt.

The first Tay Bridge proved to be dangerous - just a little too dangerous - and Sir Thomas Bouch was forced into a short and publically discredited retirement. From the above facts and the doubts they give rise to, there appears to be ample evidence to sustain any equally severe criticism of the companies themselves and the luckier civil engineers whom they employed. They appear to have been the ones who, for want of a better phrase, got away with it.

SCOTT BRUCE.

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THE CALDONIAN RAILWAY - GLASGOW TO ABERDEEN Cont.

It was in 1863 that the Perth General Joint Station Committee was set up, and although the Caledonian amalgamations of 1865 and 1866 reduced the number of companies involved, there remained three right down to the time of the 1923 Grouping. While the approach lines from both north and south were Caledonian, the ownership of the station itself was shared with the Highland Railway and the North British Railway. From an early date in the history of Scottish railways, Perth occupied a special place in connection with Queen Victoria's journeys to and from Balmoral. On the northward journey, the Royal Train stopped for the Queen and her entourage to take breakfast, and for these auspicious occasions, apartments were set aside in the adjoining station hotel. It was probably this Royal patronage that caused Perth station to be one of the first on the Caledonian Railway to be modernised.

Perth station stands on the site of what at one time was a church, which the Company rebuilt in Marshall Place, after buying the land for the building of a station.

The accommodation provided in the station included a ticket office, first

and third class ladies and gentlemen's waiting rooms, a post office and a telegraph office. The ticket office was split up into three portions, one each for the Scottish North Eastern Railway, the Scottish Central and the Edinburgh, Perth and Dundee Railways. Also each Company had its own parcels office. The refreshment rooms were again split up into first and third class. All this accommodation was provided at ground floor level, while on the first floor there were parlour rooms, dining rooms and bedrooms.

Internally the stone walls were of plaster finish, while the exterior faces of the building retained the imposing stonework, which is said to have come from the original church.

From an early date much of the express passenger traffic dealt with at Perth involved marshalling and remmarshalling of long and heavy trains. Expresses from the Highland Railway carried separate sections for the east coast, midland and west coast routes. Trains for Glasgow often had portions from Dundee and Aberdeen to be combined, and in the modernisation of the layout opportunity was taken to provide very long main line platforms on each side of the central island. The down main platform ( northbound trains and numbered 7 ) is 1,415 ft long, while that at the corresponding side is 1,672 ft or almost a third of a mile long. Scissors crossings were provided at the middle of each platform road, so that two trains or two portions to be combined into one train could be worked from the same platform. This practice still continues today on certain trains to and from the north which have separate Glasgow and Edinburgh portions. As at Stirling, there were two bay platforms at both the north and south ends of the station. Today the northbound bay platforms have been filled in and taken over as an extension to the Red Star parcels area.

It is at Perth that the Caledonian line split into two directions. The main line to Aberdeen continued north eastwards through Strathmore, while a branch line to Dundee crossed the Tay and travelled east along the Garse of Gowrie. We shall continue to follow the original course to Aberdeen as far as Kinnaber Junction, just north of Montrose, where the line from Dundee and Arbroath joined the Caledonian for the final run in to the northern capital, and then trace the present day route from Perth itself.

North of Perth the line passed through Luncarty and then Stanley, where the Highland Line branched off to the west. Continuing on through Cargill, the line came to Coupar Angus, which also had a branch line serving Blairgowrie. From Coupar Angus the line continued to Forfar and in doing so crossed the junction with the Newtyle Railway. Like most of the stations on this line, Forfar station was a stone building consisting of a ticket office, ticket hall, waiting rooms and staff accommodation for porters and station master.

The next stage of the journey took the Caledonian over part of the original Arbroath and Forfar line, from which it branched off after passing Guthrie and continued northwards through Glasterlaw to Bridge of Dun. Bridge of Dun station had a branch line serving Brechin, which is still used today but only for goods traffic. The station at Bridge of Dun had waiting rooms and buildings on both platforms linked by a cast - iron footbridge. The building was of stone construction and had a glazed canopy supported by a series of cast - iron columns.

From Bridge of Dun, the line continued north and met the North British line at Kinaber Junction, so before we go further north we shall trace the route from Perth eastwards to Dundee.

Leaving Perth for Dundee the line crossed the Tay and travelled east past Barnhill, Kinfauns, Glencarse, Errol, Inchtute and Invergowrie to Dundee. Only Errol and Invergowrie remain open to passengers, the latter being reduced to an unstaffed halt. Arriving in Dundee the Caledonian trains had the choice of two stations, their own Dundee West rebuilt in the 1870's or Tay Bridge, the through station to the north belonging to the North British. As most trains from Glasgow to Aberdeen travelled via Perth and Forfar, it was unnecessary for the Caledonian to use Tay Bridge as a through route and Dundee west was sufficient to meet the needs of a terminus station for trains from Glasgow.

Dundee West was situated near Yeaman Shore and South Union Street and was an integral part of the town. The accommodation provided was L - shaped and the ground floor consisted of a booking - hall and office in the main entrance. On either side of the booking hall were doors leading out onto the platforms. On the one side of the main entrance, separated by an exit passage, there was a



large parcels office. On the other side was the station master's office and a telegraph office. The remainder of the accommodation was situated along the length of the departure platform and consisted of a left luggage office, toilets, first and third class waiting rooms, a gents first class waiting room, a general waiting room and first and third class refreshment rooms, separated by a communal kitchen. Staff accommodation was provided for ticket collectors, guards and porters.

The building was an attractive stone structure decorated with stepped gable end walls and stone pinnacles on the stair tower and right wing. Sadly, however, this attractive station was closed and subsequently demolished. All the trains formerly using Dundee West were transferred to Dundee Tay Bridge, which in comparison was a very plain building indeed. The original entrance was off Riverside Drive. This British Rail have sealed off, after building a modern entrance next to the Caledonian goods shed, which is still used today both for freight and administrative purposes. The present modern entrance to Tay Bridge is a vast improvement to the earlier one and sited nearer to the old entrance to Dundee West station.

From Dundee Tay Bridge the line passes through Dock Street tunnel, past Camperdown Junction and through West Ferry to arrive at Broughty Ferry. Here the railway splits the town in two as it runs to Carnoustie and Arbroath. The main accommodation for this station is sited on the southbound platform and consists of ticket office, parcels office, waiting room and ladies and gents toilets. The interior of this station has changed a little since it was built, as the present parcels office was the original ticket office and the present ticket office used to be the station master's office. The waiting room has been given a glass front in place of the original stone wall facade. An interesting feature of this station is the high level timber faced signal box, which is unusual. A footbridge links the two platforms together and is incorporated into the signal box structure on one side and the stone building on the other.

After Broughty Ferry, the line passes Balmossie Halt, installed by British Rail for the new housing schemes there, Monifieth, Barry Links, and another new halt at Golf Street, before entering Carnoustie.

This is a delightful little station some six miles from Arbroath, the nearest large town. The main building is built on the northbound platform, being nearest to the town. The railway cuts off the town from the seafront and the only access to the shore is either by the level crossing at the station or by one of the footbridges along the line. A large stone built building on the southbound platform, which provided waiting rooms, staff rooms and a store has recently been demolished and in its place is a modern waiting room, which looks more like an enlarged bus shelter than a railway waiting room. True, as a piece of architecture it is functional and obviously serves its purpose of protecting passengers from the elements. It could also be argued that the all - round glazing provides the passengers with a better opportunity of clearly seeing the arrival of their relatively quiet diesel train. This the original building did not provide, even though it had a character of its own which is non - existent in the modern shelter.

The interiors of the main building and the original one on the southbound platform were elegantly furnished in vertical timber boarding. The waiting rooms had coal fires, which apart from providing sufficient warmth, provided a homely atmosphere and adequate comfort. With the modern waiting room on the southbound platform looking decidedly out of place, in fairness an attempt has been made to improve the buildings on the northbound platform by the use of modern doors and a bright colour scheme, to give a more inviting appearance. However, even this building has not escaped the modern trimmings. The attractive valance work of the canopy has been replaced by plain vertical boarding along the length and sides. Underneath the canopy gables the return walls from the building have been removed and at the entrance have been replaced by vertical timber slats. The new canopy over the entrance to the waiting area / ticket office looks as if it has been stuck on the building, and whilst it is recommended that some shelter is provided at the entrance, it would perhaps have been better had the canopy length been the same as the width of the building itself.

THE CALEDONIAN RAILWAY - GLASGOW TO ABERDEEN Cont.

The next main line station is Arbroath. The station, which is situated right in the middle of the town with easy access to the main shopping streets, is a very busy station and the terminus of local trains serving intermediate stations to Dundee.

The station is built on two levels. The main entrance, which contains the ticket office and parcels office is at street level, whereas the railway runs at a lower level underneath the entrance hall. At platform level there are four platforms, although at the present time only platforms two and three are used for passenger traffic. Platform No.1 was a bay platform adjoining the goods yard and was used for parcels and freight bound for stations to the north. Platform No. 2 is the main southbound platform and contains the major accommodation. On it is a general waiting room, a ladies waiting room and toilets, gents toilets, staff and store rooms. Across the line is the island platform 3 and 4, which provides access for trains bound for Aberdeen. On this platform are three individual buildings containing waiting rooms and a store. The interiors of these rooms, as at Carnoustie, were elegantly furnished in vertical timber boarding taken this time up to eye level only and the remainder of the wall up to the ceiling was plastered. All the floors and seats were again of timber, a material used to the full by the railways. The present day station was built in 1911 replacing the original buildings.

Montrose is the next station on the line to the north and lies between Montrose Basin and the town itself. The line crosses the estuary on a viaduct before entering the station. At one time there was an extensive goods yard and even an engine shed. Now the goods yard is reduced in size and a potato warehouse occupies the original engine shed site.

The main building lies on the southbound platform, being nearest to the town situated to the east of the railway. As is the case at Carnoustie, a smaller building on the northbound platform, which contained waiting rooms and toilets has been demolished and replaced by a small shelter.

THE CALEDONIAN RAILWAY - GLASGOW TO ABERDEEN cont.

From Montrose the line goes north and joins the former Caledonian line at Kinnaber Junction and from there reaches up to Stonehaven, passing Craigo, Marykirk, Laurencekirk, Fordoun and Drumlithie, all of which have long ceased to exist as passenger stations.

Stonehaven lies to the west of the town in a very quiet residential area. The main entrance building is on the southbound platform. Like Arbroath, the platform level and entrance hall level are different. Whereas the railway line at Arbroath runs below street level, the reverse is the case at Stonehaven. One thing which spoils the original smart appearance of the station has been the replacement of the original canopy and building of the northbound platform by a modern waiting shelter. And yet the shelter itself is again the best looking of the shelters that have recently been built, partly because of the materials used. Instead of large areas of glass and tubular steel sections, as was the original design for these shelters, timber, glass and stone have been used to good effect. Sadly though, the shelter looks lost and out of place in comparison to the rest of the station, more so when one looks at the grandeur of the original canopy on the southbound platform, supported by a twin row of columns as if forming a guard of honour for the passengers.

There are now no intermediate stations between Stonehaven and Aberdeen, which being a terminal station provides more facilities on a larger scale. There are two concourses to this station, one immediately on entering which contains the ticket offices and the larger concourse beyond, where the remaining accommodation is to be found. Due to the size of the station and the obvious desire of the railway company to leave the concourse as free as possible from supports, this brought about the need to span greater lengths thus increasing proportionately the height of the roof. The total glazed roof provides more than adequate light during daylight hours. The station has remained unaltered in design since it was built and the original ticket office is still in existence.

Since the late 1960's the station has seen considerable change in the reduction of platform space at the northern end of the concourse. With the

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closure of lines to Peterhead, Fraserburgh and the coastal towns leaving only the direct Aberdeen - Inverness line, all the platforms, except the north end of Platform 6, are now no longer used. Tracks have been lifted and car parking and office developments substituted.

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On the line from Glasgow to Aberdeen, the original route from Buchanan Street via Perth and Forfar had 108 signal boxes, with an additional 14 between Perth and Dundee West. However by 1962 the number had been reduced by 13 due to the opening of a new box at Perth and by 1966 a further 32 boxes had been withdrawn from use. In 1967 the route via Forfar was closed to passengers and this involved the closing of a further 15 boxes, including the high level box over Queen Street station, when it was modernised to take the services transferred from Buchanan Street. Between 1968 and 1975 eleven more boxes closed and as power boxes continue to be built there will be fewer and fewer mechanical boxes still in operation.

Cowlairs signal box stands to the west of the main line out of Glasgow Queen Street station at the top of the Cowlairs incline. The box was rebuilt and modernised in 1957 and for ten years controlled the track from the north end of the Queen Street tunnel to just beyond Bishopbriggs station, where control of the next section was handed over to Cadder South box. This box was altered in 1972 to meet the needs of high speed trains and now has an electric panel to replace the existing track diagram.

Between Cowlairs and Perth there are some 14 boxes still in use. Perth was a focal point in the railway network in Scotland, being the second largest railway junction. The signalling system which had given splendid service in its day was ancestral and cumbersome. Boxes required renewal, new layouts were required to meet modern needs and the electrical appliances were remote from modern standards. Without power signalling it would have been impossible to renew all that had once been serviceable to meet present day necessities.

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Prior to the introduction of power signalling, the railway from Hilton Junction, south of Perth, to Stanley, where the Highland Line diverged, was worked by thirteen mechanical boxes, each standing on its own, although complementary to each other, but thus creating duplication and sometimes differences in priorities. There were 544 mechanical levers in the old boxes operated by a staff of 48 signalmen. In the new box the staff quota is now three traffic regulators and nine signalmen.

The Perth box was opened on 26th February 1962 and was based on the type of accommodation similar to Cowlairs. The relay room, staff messroom, work - shop and power house are at ground level, with the control room situated above the relay room. The box is brick built and also has tinted glazing to prevent glare. A total of seven route miles is the area controlled by the box, including the entrance and exit of the marshalling yard. At the extremities of the area controlled are three electro - mechanical signalboxes, Hilton Junction to the south, Stanley Junction in the north and Barnhill in the west. At Hilton and Barnhill the existing boxes are retained but modified for electrical working, while at Stanley Junction, a complete new 45 frame box is provided.

The control panel at Perth is 37 feet long , 6 feet high and 3 feet deep overall. It is arranged in 5 sections, the centre section, which incorporates the station area being the longest. The remaining four sections are attached in wings, two either side of the central section at an angle of 150 degrees to each other.

The panel is an entrance - exit type, controlling 470 routes ( 141 main and 329 subsidiary ) for the area. Routes are set up by the operation of key switches and push buttons incorporated in the track diagram of the panel. Signal indications are given in a single three lamp indicator; red for ' on ', green for main ' off ' and white for subsidiary ' off '. A main signal lamp failure produces a flashing indication. Exit push buttons are illuminated as soon as the lock relays have responded. Point operation is by compressed air supply from two compressors in the power house and a total of 152 electropneumatic point machines control the points.

THE CALEDONIAN RAILWAY - GLASGOW TO ABERDEEN

Between Perth and Dundee there are five signal boxes and at Dundee four signal boxes control the entrance and exit to Tay Bridge station.

Buckingham Junction box is a modern brick box built in 1958. It is an electro-mechanical box controlling the lines from Magdallen Green through to the station and the tracks leading to the motive power depot.

Dundee Central box controls the entrance and exit tracks from the Tay Bridge and the line out of Dundee to Perth. Then Tay Bridge West, now renamed Dundee West, controls the south end of the Tay Bridge station, while Tay Bridge East at the other end of the station controls the entrance to the Dock Street tunnel and up to the next section, which is controlled by Camperdown Junction box.

Signalling plays an important part in the running of a modern railway and gradually the existing boxes are being replaced by newer ones designed to take over greater route miles of track. It is these boxes which enable the railway to provide fast, efficient services and also greatly increase the high standards of safety that are now practically taken for granted.

( To be concluded )

LESLIE MORRISON.

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THE TAY BRIDGE DISASTERA FINAL CHAPTER ?

A few weeks ago I chanced to travel by bus from the city of Dundee across the silvery Tay and thence to the heartland of Fife. I also chanced to find that one of my fellow travellers was a man of the cloth with whom I have long been acquainted. My acquaintance was, with the exception of his collar, dressed entirely in black. Beneath his hat he sported dark heavy spectacles, which encompassed a pair of thick black eyebrows. I know of no more sincere a man - a man whose sermons carry the full wrath of the Lord but whose charity has often been criticised for its over - generosity.

The formalities of buying tickets completed, I mentioned that I had intended travelling to my destination by train but that some delay on the line had caused my particular train to be cancelled. Then he stated a very strange thing. He told me authoritatively that there would be no trains from Dundee direct to Fife after 1979. When I tried to explain how unlikely I thought this would be, in view of the increased traffic being generated by the oil bonanza, he recounted a most uncanny event.

During the autumn of 1979 he had been approached by the organiser of a special excursion train, planned to leave Dundee and cross the Tay Bridge at the exact time at which disaster befell the first bridge a hundred years previously. It was hoped that special permission would be obtained to stop the train on the bridge, so that passengers, having alighted, could take part in a short service of remembrance. My friend had agreed to conduct the worship.

The train, a three car d.m.u., had left Dundee's platform 3 sometime about seven on the evening of Sunday, December 30th 1979 and proceeded rather gingerly, due to signal checks, up into the High Girders. Special permission to stop had been granted. By contrast with that fateful night in 1879, the eighty - three passengers descended to the trackside above a becalmed river, glistening from the light of a full moon which shone down from the midst of a star studded sky.



The opening hymn was in its last verse when the first whistle was heard from the direction of Peacehill. It was not very distinct, for by now a fresh breeze had arisen. During the prayer which followed two further prolonged whistles could be heard. Many straightened their bowed heads and turned to face the direction of Wormit. Although visibility was now impaired by driving sleet and sounds made less audible by gale force winds, there could be no mistaking the approach of a steam train. The service had petered out and the crowd stood aghast as the crowd came on and on towards them. There were cries of "What can this be?", cries to the Almighty and other cries that were stifled. Some sought to take refuge back in the train, but the majority stood petrified. As very few were accustomed to standing near a speeding train at trackside level, engine No 224, its five carriages and brake van, assumed all the more frightening proportions. Even if they could have, there was no place within the confines of the Girders, to which the worshippers could have run. For the few seconds as it passed, some faces of the seventy - five passengers and crew could be glimpsed. At the very moment when the last vehicle went safely by, a most ferocious gust of wind blew. Then there was a lurch.

To some it was not unlike a swaying, to others the track seemed to quiver and yet to others everything around seemed to sag. A few helped their friends with outstretched hands to get clear, but many times more their number plummeted into the icy waters below. Despite all efforts by our modern sophisticated emergency services, only two survived their ordeal in the water below. On the following morning a gap of fifty yards was found to split the deck.

My friend was one of the eight who survived. "Try a little arithmetic" he said. He went on to say that the bridge structure was subsequently examined and although found to be sound, the cost of repair could not be budgeted for. I reminded this survivor that as yet it was only 1976 and asked how he could account for his travels into the future. He could not. As I remarked, however, in my opening paragraph, I know of no more sincere a man and so I feel that it is my duty to tell you of this strange tale, which, if it is as I believe true, we shall all be powerless to prevent.

SCOTT BRUCE.

